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SUBJECT: JORDAN MEDIA: 9/11 EDITORIALS TURN ANGRY

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1. (SBU) Summary: Opinion columns published around the 9/11 anniversary in Jordan reflected a depressed and angry tone, with many writers railing against a U.S. response to the attacks they claim has undermined global security. One writer said the time for sympathy with America was over, and accused Arab satellite networks of serving the U.S. agenda by continuing to offer sympathetic portrayals of the families of 9/11 victims. A recurrent theme was despair of a "new-conservative takeover" of the U.S. Government in the wake of the attacks that adopted Israel's interests as paramount in the response to 9/11. A number of articles raised doubts about Al-Qaeda responsibility for the attacks reflecting a persistent, if perhaps minority, view among the public. Finally, a relatively few writers bucked these trends, offering introspection and lamenting both the conditions in the Arab world that give rise to terrorism and a continued failure by both East and West to solve root causes. End summary.

2. (SBU) In our third 9/11 anniversary at this post, we have seen a steadily deteriorating response on editorial pages to the occasion, from sympathy mixed with apprehension (2002); to shock, disillusion and despair in the wake of the Iraq War (2003); to this year's mix of a more robust anger and heavy cynicism about U.S. motives in the region. There is a feeling reflected of international security coming unhinged, with the U.S. embarked on a military-dominated agenda in which no corner of the Arab world is safe. Of course, these are the views of Jordanian editorialists and opinion writers with all their biases, contradictions and hyperbole well known. Yet, there does not seem to be a great distance between their rantings on these subjects and that of the public, which feels squeezed and powerless between conflicts surrounding Jordan in which the U.S. role is viewed extremely unfavorably. What strikes us this year is the consistency and intensity of the anger directed at the U.S., with hostility towards Al Qaeda attackers and their aims fading steadily from most analyses.

America, Unleashed

3. (U) Perhaps the dominant theme in this year's 9/11 navel gazing was that of a tethered pre-9/11 U.S. unleashed by the attacks to run amok on the world. This view was generally conflated with the idea that the U.S. exploited the worldwide outpouring of sympathy that followed 9/11. A sub-theme alleges that neo-conservatives and pro-Israeli religious elements seized control of the nation's post 9/11 foreign policy. An example of the genre came in a 9/13 piece by Ghassan Muamar in the newly-launched "al Ghad": "There is a new reality at work wherein extremist religious trends in the United States, that are based on principles of extremism and exaggeration in the interpretation of the Christian belief and whose objectives match those of the Zionist state, have taken control of the White House, and have placed the importance of Israel's existence, survival and safety opposite that of mankind's safety and international security." Also in "Al Ghad" on 9/11 came this piece from daily columnist Samih Al Ma'ayteh: "The weeks that followed the attacks of September 11 brought to the U.S. much sympathy, even from Arabs and moderate Islamist movements who condemned the attacks. But the U.S. was not concerned with this outpouring of sympathy...Under the pretext of fighting terror, the U.S. administration went berserk."

Doubt and Denial, Still on Tap

4. (U) Those who persist in the belief that the CIA or the Mossad or parties as yet unknown carried out the 9/11 attacks also had their say. Mohammad Amayreh wrote in Al Dustoor on 9/11: "America has gone to excess in its vengefulness, assuming it had the right of revenge to start with, after it found or fabricated information that allowed it to blame Arabs and Muslims for the quake that shook it and the world." In a particularly ugly, anti-Semitic screed, Khalil Sawahiri writes 9/13 in Al Dustoor: "Since matters are judged by their results, the American September is without a doubt of American Jewish making and achieved its objectives on many

levels, the most serious of which is the crime of changing (education) curricula away from its religious, humanitarian and civilizational bases, as well as instigating hatred against Islam and Muslims and turning them into outcasts wherever they go." The same paper's 9/12 unsigned editorial continues the theme: "What are the Arabs and Muslims guilty of when all the evidence showed that Osama Bin Laden and his organization were the creation of the American intelligence apparatus?..With all good intentions we wanted to be part of a world that rejects violence and condemns terrorism, a world where we mourn American victims and Americans mourn our victims. But those who planned to take control of the world, to steal its oil and riches, and to put all the people under Israel's control knew that what happened was part of the plan."

Introspection and Root Causes

15. (SUB) A smaller number of writers offered introspection and a more pragmatic, if depressed, response to the anniversary. Generally secular and liberal in outlook and relatively few in number, these voices have paradoxically been empowered by the September 11 attacks, able now to offer a secular liberal critique of the state of Arab society in much the same spirit of those behind the UN Arab Human Development Report(s). Bateer Wardam, a leader of this trend in Jordan, wrote 9/13 in Al Dustoor in response to those who continue to deny Al Qaeda responsibility for the 9/11 attacks: "It is time to grow up and find the courage to diagnose the bitter reality that we, ourselves, have created and from which our enemies are benefiting...the idea of raising photos of Bin Laden and considering him a hero is the expression of a huge malfunction in the Muslim mind that must be addressed." Another writer asked readers to consider what would not have occurred but for 9/11: "If the U.S. security agencies had been successful (in thwarting the attacks) would the world be much different than it is today?...America would not have invaded Iraq nor even Afghanistan, despite what is being said about the plans of the neo-conservatives. Saddam Hussein would still be in his job, and so would Mullah Omar and Osama Bin Laden...We have to remember that it was the Arab world that stood against Colin Powell's plan of imposing 'smart sanctions' against Iraq."

16. (U) A related theme was lamentation that the world had yet to come together to identify and address root causes for terrorism and the ongoing conflict. The moderate, English language Jordan Times editorialized 9/13: "The United States and the international community must dig deeper in search for the real reasons that prompt people to commit acts of terrorism. Is it only economic deprivation or poverty that drive people to despair? Is it the denial of freedom and democracy? Or is it something else that has yet to be identified?" Writing on 9/11, influential Palestinian writer Uraib Rintawi claimed to know the root causes and warned the U.S. of the consequences of its policies: "Washington knows full well that the end of its war on terror is still very far off. What it has not seemed to learn is that its policies, which have only grown in arrogance and disregard for the just causes of Arabs and Muslims since September 11, sow more seeds of hatred and make greater areas fertile ground for Arab and Islamic enmity for Washington and its policies. Washington will not be able to curb Arab and Islamic enmity towards the United States as long as it continues to dismiss their just demands, particularly in Palestine."

Comment

17. (SBU) With some exceptions, we see an overall deteriorating trend in the way 9/11 is viewed among the admittedly biased and cynical Jordanian editorial establishment. This is not entirely surprising given the proximity of the continued conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and the war in Iraq, not to mention increased terrorism to the south in Saudi Arabia. The world really does look worse for many Jordanians, and blaming U.S. foreign policy post 9/11 resonates. For the time being, the U.S. military response continues to drown out our other initiatives, at least on the opinion pages, if not always on the ground.

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